HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF PALM DESERT

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

O.H. 78

CARL HANSEN

Interviewed by

Patricia Young & Anne Carpenter

July 8, 1980

INTERVIEWEE: CARL HANSEN

INTERVIEWER: Anne Carpenter & Patricia Young

SUBJECT:

DATE:

TRANSCRIBER: Linda A. Jantzen

Y: This is an interview with Carl Hansen for the Historical Society of Palm Desert Oral History Project on July 8, 1980, at twelve o'clock in the afternoon at the home of Anne Carpenter on San Jose in Palm Desert.

C: So let's start first with how you and your wife Dorothy came to reside in this area of Palm Desert, and how you came to the valley actually.

H: Well, this Ken Lipkey and Glen Wilson asked me down in 1945.

C: Now did you come to work or just to look it over?

H: Well, we drove down to look it over one day because they was building that packing house, date packing house, in Indio. So we came down, we had to come down to see, we was going to live in Glen's house there. He said we could stay there.

C: Yes.

H: But that was in April, 1945, wasn't it? Or the summer of 1945 anyway because it was awfully hot. And we didn't have refrigeration in the car, of course. We had a cooler, water cooler, in his house.

Y: This was the two-story building on

H: No. This was

C: This was the Glen Wilson ranch where Fay and Slim . . .

H: Across the road.

C: You see.

Y: Oh, that's right because Davis had the two-story.

C: Yes.

H: Yes, next to that.

C: And the packing house was the one that Davis was interested in, wasn't it?

H: I believe so.

C: Yes. Davis and Glen Wilson and Ken Lipkey.

H: Yes.

C: And then you worked on that or built it.

H: That was on forty-sixth and Madison in Indio.

Y: Where were you coming from and how did you know Glen Wilson?

H: Well, from Santa Anita racetrack. And he was the

superintendent. Of course, Ben was the superintendent of the track. When he and Wilson . . . I think Lipkey was the superintendent of the maintenance crew and then when the war came along, why they closed it up. So Glen went down to Camp Pendelton when they was building Camp Pendleton and that's where I really got acquainted with him was down there because we worked down there during the war.

Y: So how long did it take you to build this packing house in

H: Well, build it. I didn't build it. I was just putting some additions on. I don't know, we were here a couple of months, I think something like that.

C: How did you happen to buy your lot?

H: Well, on the weekends we'd drive around the country here. And of course there was nothing here, and we got to liking it. And I think we bought it in 1946.

C: And you bought it from the

H: Yes.

C: And it was the best lot on the street.

H: Yes. It was better than yours, it said.

Y: (laughter) All right. Where actually is your home now?

H: Right next door here.

Y: Was that you were in Santa Fe and

H: No.

C: It's right adjacent to ours, to mine.

H: I think we were Lot 9, weren't we?

C: Yes.

H: And what is your lot here?

C: I don't even know.

H: Seven, eight, seven or eight.

C: Seven or eight. But anyhow when Colonel Ellsworth, who was a high-powered salesman, sold all of us our lots, they were the best ones. Dorothy really wanted a view of San Jacinto and San Grogonio and, see, she picked it out, I guess. But we ended up building on ours first and then I remember one morning I looked up and there were Carl and Dorothy outside. We had a piece of plywood over a wheelbarrel for our table and we were having lunch or something. And Carl and Dorothy came by. And then, how long was it until you started your house?

H: Well, we poured the floor in April of 1947, before you started yours here.

C: Yes.

H: Because we was pouring that, there was nothing here at all.

C: Yes.

H: And we poured the floor and then we colored it up with sand so you couldn't see anything. And then we went back until the following . . . I think we started it in November, started building. But then all summer the concrete slab lay all summer covered up, I know. We came down and cleaned it up and went to work.

Y: So you continued to work down here.

H: Yes. After we got the frame up. And we started working before we finished our house. I know we pretty near froze to death in winter because our house wasn't finished inside.

C: You were living in it.

H: We were living in it. Yes. Then we stayed over at the O'dell's, so we could move in.

Y: Was that the same O'dells that have the Widell Ranch

H: Yes. And then they built that house for them. That is, I started it. I didn't finish it because we got to working for Mrs. Lake over there, finished hers.

Y: Mrs. Lake?

H: That's where . . .

: is

H: Nona and Lloyd Nona was her daughter. And Lloyd And they sold it to someone that had an air park there, didn't they? Flying, yes, coming in. Now I understand it's sold to, oh, I don't know, that big place over there.

C: Rancho Los

H: No.

C: The

H: What's the name of that big park that's across from Eisenhower?

Y: Spring.

H: Springs. I think they said they bought it.

: It's adjacent to their property right now.

H: Gosh, I don't know. I haven't been over there since, so I don't know where it is.

Y: After you finished working on the packing plant those couple of months, did you immediately go into construction down here?

H: No, we went back to Monrovia and finished up there. It was some months before we came back down. Well, we didn't come back down, see, that was in 1945. We didn't come down here to build until 1947.

Y: What did you start working on when you did come back,

other than your own house?

H: Mrs. Lake over there, and O'dells big home down there where the college is.

Y: How did you get to know these people?

H: Well, I got acquainted with O'dell first. Of course, we knew Ken and Mr. Wilson all the time, but then we came down here to work for O'dell too, got acquainted with him. Gee, it's been so long ago, I've forgotten.

Y: When you say we, are you talking about you and your wife or someone else?

H: No, Dorothy.

Y: Was your wife working with you?

H: Well, yes. Working, well, she didn't work anywhere. She stayed in the home after we got out so she could stay in it. Until that earthquake came along and pretty near scared her to death.

C: Yes. She was a good homemaker and loved to be at home. And so that was great.

Y: What are some of the buildings that you worked on in the cove area, Rancho Mirage in Palm Desert?

H: Gee.

C: Well, you built our store and the carpenter's furniture

store in 1950 and 1951 because it was finished in June of 1951. And Carl built that one. And then the others that you built, you built the Village Market, didn't you?

H: Yes, but then I built some homes up on and those three homes up there. I don't remember what year that was, but that was before we built the Village Market though, I think.

C: Yes.

H: Dr. Alexander's home.

C: That's right.

H: Yes.

C: In the club grounds, Dr. Alex's.

H: Yes.

C: Home was.

H: Yes.

C: And then when did you start working for Cliff? Do you remember?

H: I think it was right after I built Dr. Alexander's because I remember Dr. Alexander saying to Cliff that he'd like to have me back again. And Cliff said, no chance. So I don't know what the doctor wanted built. So what year did we build the Village Market? Do you remember?

C: I think it was built in 1955.

H: Yes, I was going to say 1954.

C: Fifty-four and fifty-five.

H: Yes.

C: And then you started working for Cliff.

H: Yes.

C: And doing everything that he needed done. Didn't you remodel the fire cliff?

H: The old building first.

C: Yes.

H: Yes. And from then on it was right on through until about 1960, I guess.

C: Yes. So whatever Mr. Henderson wanted, he always came to Carl. Then after that, how did you happen to build the Bromley building? It was for John Moon, wasn't it?

H: Yes.

C: John Moon built that.

H: That was in 1963.

C: That was one of the first buildings on El Paseo, one of the first good solid buildings.

H: Well, yes. That was on El Paseo, but we built the first building, those apartments out San Luis Rey, and then those apartments there on the side of his office there.

C: Yes.

H: Fire cliff.

C: Fire cliff, they were called Fire Cliff. And then the apartment or the apartments that were built up on San Luis Rey were called Shadow Cliffs.

H: Yes.

C: Right.

Y: Did they also swing down on El Paseo? There was a sign up that said Shadow Club Colony.

H: Well, that was the apartments.

Y: They came on down on El Paseo next to Fire Cliff.

H: Well, they were from Shadow Mountain and on down El Paseo on the west side of El Paseo. But they didn't come clear down to . . .

C: It didn't come clear down to El Paseo.

H: No.

C: Because then he used that one lot and built his temporary office there.

H: Yes. Temporary, that was temporary about twenty years, wasn't it?

C: Yes, it was temporary for twenty years.

Y: But Fire Cliff itself, from the very inception of it then had rooms that one could stay in?

H: Yes. In the back of Fire Cliff Lodge there, but they were built though the same time that Fire Cliff was built when Firestone and Cliff started the building started with so they were old ones. And I didn't build those. The only thing I did was add on to them, so I guess that . . . are they vacant now?

C: I think they're not used at all. I don't know what has happened to that property. I think Mr. Henderson would probably have to tell you whether it was sold to a corporation or what.

Y: So Shadow Cliff was just apartments then.

H: Yes.

C: But they were separately owned. I know Mrs. McDonald has one of them.

Y: Oh, it's a condominium then.

C: Yes.

H: Yes.

C: Are they attached?

H: Yes, they're all attached.

C: They're all attached.

H: Yes. And this mortician, you know, McKinley . . .

C: Yes.

H: He owned the first one there going up San Luis Rey.

C: Yes.

H: And different ones. Well, there's only four of them, I think.

C: I think

H: Four or five.

C: Yes.

H: McDonald, he bought the one in the main part of the, in the grounds, not up on San Luis Rey.

C: That's right.

Y: How many did you build in total then? Do you remember?

H: Well, there's those four or five up San Luis Rey. And then there was four, eight apartments in the grounds right next to Fire Cliff Lodge. That is those eight apartments and only two buildings. And one of them now is torn down, the first one we built.

C: Yes. That might be the very first start of condominiums that have become so fashionable, don't you think?

Y: Could be.

C: Yes.

Y: When were they built?

H: Well, those were built in about 1958.

C: In the late fifties.

H: Yes.

Y: I think Johnny Dawson beat them to the punch with the Thunderbird.

C: Oh, yes.

H: Yes.

C: Yes, that's right, but in this area.

Y: Yes.

H: Yes.

C: Yes.

Y: Now the sun lodges, were those condominiums, too? Weren't they before that?

C: Yes.

H: Yes. But they're not . . .

C: Are they attached?

H: They're not attached.

C: But it was a cooperative sort of thing where you didn't own your land . You had to lease on it.

H: Yes.

C: And I think it's about to run out. I'm not certain what happened now.

Y: How long did you actually work for Cliff Henderson?

H: Well, when we started remodeling Fire Cliff, which would have been as I remember 1955, 1956. I imagine about four years, five years, something like that.

Y: And then you went on to do other work or . . .

H: Yes. I started the Bromley building. That was 1963, the fall of 1963 and the winter of 1963 and 1964. Then we went up on the hill for Mrs. the rest of 1964 and 1965.

Y: What was that project, was that a house?

H: Well, yes, it was a horse ranch, horse stables and a two-story house and a training track.

C: It was a marvelously large house.

H: Yes.

C: That she had built up near Thomas Mountain, wasn't it? This side of Thomas Mountain.

H: Yes. Just across the hill from where you turned off seventy-four and went to San Diego. What is that, seventy-one or what is it?

C: Yes.

H: What is the road number that turns off to go down to San Diego?

Y: Isn't that right by Paradise Valley?

C: Yes. It's right by Paradise Valley. Seventy-nine I think it is.

H: Oh, seventy-nine.

C: I think it's seventy-nine, but that house was built with

roof. What was the style of that?

H: French.

C: French.

H: Yes.

C: Yes, a beautiful spot.

Y: The Bromley building interests me. What were your impressions at the time you were building it? It was a fairly wide-open expanse, wasn't it? Weren't you building like the first on El Paseo?

H: Well, that was the first building. Well, you see the Sun Lodge, of course, where they are first. And then Fire Cliff. But from San Luis Rey and on east, I think that was the first building. I don't think there's any other building on San Luis Rey, was there?

C: There was Dick 's building on El Paseo, and then the building which is now owned by Dr. Blackfield where the Desert Beautiful offices are, that was built, but I believe after the Bromley building.

H: Well . . .

C: I'm not certain.

H: What I meant was on the south side.

C: On the south side. Yes, you're right.

H: Yes.

C: Was it John Moon's idea to build in that Spanish style? Do you know who planned it?

H: Yes, the guy from Palm Springs, I think, architect.

C: Oh.

H: Let's see.

Y: Stuart

H: No. No, it was John Moon's wife's brother. What was his name? He lived here in Palm Desert and he built his own home up there on, off of what the devil was the name of that, Shadow Mountain.

C: Oh.

H: At the Shadow Mountain turns and goes on up the hill. But it was his wife's brother that was the architect.

C: Oh.

H: And he was the one who drew it up.

C: It's a nice looking building.

Y: So I understood quite awhile.

H: No. Different offices perhaps, but there was always someone in the office as I remember, doctors and so on.

Y: I heard he lost his shirt on that deal, John Moon.

C: Oh.

H: He didn't have any to start with. It was his wife's money.

C: Yes.

Y: I hope his wife didn't lose her shirt on it.

H: Well, I don't really know. But he wanted the best.

Y: So I take it, it's a substantial building then.

H: Well, I think so. At least the roof isn't sagging.

C: (laughter) And it hasn't been knocked down, but it looks like it always gets a nice tone. And I've always felt that it might have had an influence on the post office that was built. It makes a nice combination to see the building there and then to look over and see the post office which was built later, of course.

H: I wonder, does Bromley still own it, do you know?

C: I don't know. I think he's still around.

H: Because I haven't seen him for over a year.

C: Well, I think he probably does still own it.

Y: Is that the first building then on El Paseo that has a ranch tile roof?

H: I believe so.

C: Yes.

H: As I remember.

Y: So that started a trend.

C: Yes. I think so.

Y: I'm sort of interested in Palm Village too. How large were the . . . were all the lots approximately the same size?

C: Yes, I think they were. They're sort of . . . some of them are . . . Mine is sort of pie shaped, but it's narrow and then it kind of goes out a little. They must have had fun, you know, with a pair of compasses. Part of the village is in circles, you know, but I think the lots are generally speaking about the same size.

H: Well, I think they are on this street anyway.

C: Yes. On this street.

H: Until we get down here where the grapefruit grows, and then I don't know if they're . . . they weren't lots then. That was just all acreage then, wasn't it?

C: Yes.

H: At that time.

C: Because we used to, when we were building our houses, we used to go down to the grapefruit groves and get grapefruits to refresh ourselves. The people offered them to us, you know, so we went down.

H: Did Websters own that at that time? No, they weren't here yet, were they?

C: Websters came way after we did.

H: Well, Websters, Chambers . . .

C: Yes.

H: Was the first one.

C: Dr. Chambers, and then across the street, their in-laws, Dr. and his wife, so we had two doctors on this street who bought into the groves.

Y: The groves being on the street which intersects Santa Fe?

C: Yes, on Casalina. Now, Carl, you also worked down for the Gillettes.

H: Oh, yes.

C: And what did you build down there? Their house was a frame house. We went down and tried to find it, but it is pretty well destroyed.

H: Well, yes, and then, of course, they've rearranged the lots down there to my . . . well, maybe not rearranged them, but there weren't any lots there then that I remember.

C: And you didn't go in through a gate.

H: No.

C: You just went in through a dirt road.

H: Yes. Of course, the homes down here in Palm Village then, there weren't any down there so you'd go through the fields and everything else to get there.

C: Yes. The Gillettes lived here mostly during the winter, didn't they?

H: As I remember, though, they stayed some summers too because later on he said he had to get out in the summer

because the doctor told him to get out. Then they went to Idyllwild, you know.

C: Yes.

H: For awhile or up . . . yes, up higher above Idyllwild. I don't remember how long they were there.

C: And then also did they still have a home over on the . . . at Newport Beach or at Balboa?

H: I don't really know. They had a home there before they moved there, but they bought that and moved up there when they sold the place here.

C: Yes.

H: So they may have had one here before this. I don't know. But they were right on the beachfront in Newport. O'dells had a home there too, not far from Balboa.

C: Did you meet the O'dells through Marge and King Gillette?

H: No. We met them while we were living in Monrovia.

C: The O'dells?

H: Yes.

C: Oh.

H: Through some friends that I had built for there, and that's where I first met O'dells. And, of course, they owned this property here and wanted to know if I didn't want to come down and they were going to build a home here,

so that's where I first met them.

C: Well, that kind of tracks down the O'dells for us.

Y: Yes. Where did you meet the Gillettes?

H: Here in Palm Desert. I don't know how I met them. Maybe through the O'dells. Could have been. I don't remember.

C: Yes. It could have been because they all used to go to the club.

H: Yes.

C: And Carl and Dorothy belonged to the club too, but it was probably mainly through your business of constructing that somebody told somebody else that he was a good builder, you know.

H: Well, the reason we got into the club up here as a member, Mrs. Lake over there one Christmas gave us a membership, so that's how come we got into the club.

C: Yes, the first when charter memberships were . . . wasn't that nice that she was a wonderful lady and a marvelous person. And I think we got our membership because it was the thing that would be the social center of Palm Desert because, as you heard before, it was a small area and most of the things happened happened there.

H: I think it was small enough so everyone knew one another in those days.

C: Yes.

Y: I understand Gillette owned most of the estates between here at Palm Desert and Indio. Is that true?

H: Yes, Gillette Sr. Oh, the original King Gillette. It wasn't this one. This was the son. Well, of course, he probably, I don't know, did they sell it off before it was left to the son or what?

C: I think . . . I don't know, but I suppose if one looked into the history of the Mullen Investment Company who bought this to develop in the thirties, you could find out whether the heirs sold it or what, but I remember King saying that his father owned most of the ranches between here and Indio.

H: I think King told me one time that there were some big financiers that beat him out of a lot of it.

Y: Beat him out of a lot of his own property?

H: I don't remember now because I don't know as I paid too much attention to it. But I know that he lost an awful lot of it. I don't know how it was.

Y: If the Mullen Investment Company bought the property in the thirties, they didn't start developing it then. They didn't start developing Palm Village then, did they?

C: Yes. In the thirties, I think it was before the war.

Then the war stopped it.

H: I see.

C: You see, the war was in forty-one or started in forty-one, but I think they started it in the thirties.

Y: Do you know what homes they had built or was there anyone living here?

C: Yes, they had built some of the houses on San Jacinto. The ones where Ann Shutes and J. B. used to live and Lillian and Warner Goobits bought one of them. Of course, they bought them probably in the later forties because they came, they moved out from the Detroit or wherever they lived.

H: Goobits.

C: The Goobits did in along about forty-six, but I think those homes might have been built, some of them, in the late, oh, like thirty-nine or so. We'd have to find out from the Mullen Investment Company.

Y: How about the Gurley Company? Do you think that was built then too?

C: The one on the corner here? Yes, I think so. Do you know that I think Fay got in touch with the man who built that. He's down at Coachella Pipe, Bud, I've forgotten his name.

H: I don't remember his name now either.

C: But he could tell you about that. He will tell you.

H: Was that fish place built about the same time? The building up here they tore down.

Y: Palm Village Inn.

C: Yes. I think it was built about the same time, and also the Palm Village Land Company office which is now the Hal Capp property. And that was all built and there was a wonderful, I know when we came in forty-three and forty-four, the people in Cathedral City told us about Palm Village and they were interested in some of the lots. They thought it was a nice place to be and the Mullen Investment Company had put out oleanders lining all of the streets and you see remnants of them here in Palm Village. And they made it really a very tropical first-class place. And then we came along and that was, of course, before Cliff and his people started the Palm Desert site.

H: These big palm trees that are on the property line down here between us and the groves, were those big tall palms here when we came? He asked me and I don't remember.

C: Mr. Angle, who now owns the Chambers or Webster property. I don't remember either.

H: Well, they certainly weren't that all anymore.

C: No, they've grown.

Y: They were squirts then.

C: Yes. The first houses here in Palm Village were frame and stucco.

H: Well, these houses around here then, they were all built about the same year in this block.

C: Yes, in our block here.

H: Before you cross the street.

C: Yes.

H: And these too because across the street they were building in forty-seven I know because they were working at night when we used to come down. Had lights going and, you know.

C: Yes.

H: And Tupper.

C: Yes.

H: Tupper built that, didn't he?

C: Yes.

H: He had the lumber yard here.

C: Burr Tupper had the lumber yard here. It was called the Tupper Lumber Company.

Y: In Indio?

C: No, from Palm Village. And he had been in the war and immediately the war closed he came out and started the

Tupper Lumber Company. It was the predecessor to the Jim Young. What did Jim Young call the lumber company? It was before the . . .

Y: Eckerts?

C: Eckerts. Mr. Jim Young passed away and then she married Ken Eckert.

Y: That was Valley Lumber, wasn't it?

C: It was Valley Lumber, yes. Jim Young named it the Valley Lumber Company, but Burr Tupper was the original owner of that and they built the house across the street as Carl said in the summer of forty-seven, in the early morning and at night. And when we came back, I asked Daisy Tupper who was a real cute gal how did the summer go? And she said, if I ever build another house, I hope somebody takes a picture because it had been a very warm summer and every morning they had started work when dawn came and, of course, there was no refrigeration and it really was quite a thing to build a house here. They later went, after he sold to Jim Young and Jim renamed it Valley Lumber, Burr and Sadie went to Puerta Rico because many years later they came back and visited us. But he had, he was quite an innovator